



Congressman Lee M. Zeldin

First Congressional District of New York

April 17, 2017

Honorable Steve Bellone
Suffolk County Executive
H. Lee Dennison Building
100 Veterans Memorial Highway

Hauppauge, N.Y. 11788-0099

Dear County Executive Bellone;

Last summer, the outer beach at Smith Point County Park was unavailable to the residents of Suffolk County for almost the entire season, because of piping plover management required by the United States Fish Wildlife Services (USFWS). Hopefully we would both agree this was a completely unacceptable situation especially when options exist that can balance the protection of wildlife with the public access that Suffolk residents have paid for and look forward to all year. Our shared constituents seeking to enjoy Smith Point County Park deserve the same flexibility afforded to visitors at other beaches that contain critical habitat for protected birds such as those of Cape Cod National Seashore. In an effort to find a solution to this problem, last August, I asked USFWS to work with Suffolk County to develop an alternative management plan for Smith Point County Park. Almost 9 months have passed and the County has still not taken the necessary action to work with USFWS to move this plan forward.

The USFWS team has met with Suffolk County Legislator Kate Browning, Suffolk County Parks Department personnel, members of your staff, and my staff at my district office. The USFWS presented alternative management proposals for Suffolk County's consideration. At the end of the meeting, Suffolk County Park's personnel understood the next step was for Suffolk County to petition USFWS for relief and to develop an alternative management plan. It is my understanding Suffolk County has not yet petitioned USFWS. ***My last letter to you from February 2017 outlining the potential solution and need for county action is enclosed with this letter.***

I urge Suffolk County to contact USFWS to begin discussion on an alternative plan for managing piping plover at Smith Point County Park. Once the process has begun, we can all work together on a better plan for the people of Suffolk County.

I thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this manner. Should you or your staff require any further information or assistance, please contact my District Director Mark Woolley at mark.woolley@mail.house.gov or 631-289-1097 or my Legislative Director Kevin Dowling at kevin.dowling@mail.house.gov or 202-225-3826.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lee Zeldin', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Lee Zeldin
Member of Congress,
1st District of New York



Congressman Lee M. Zeldin

First Congressional District of New York

February 9, 2017

The Honorable Steven Bellone
Suffolk County Executive
H. Lee Dennison Building
100 Veterans Memorial Highway
Hauppauge, NY 11788-0099

Dear County Executive Bellone:

I write you on behalf of our shared constituents who look forward to enjoying Smith Point County Park every summer, but who are increasingly concerned that access to this beloved beach will be once again severely restricted due to the presence of piping plovers. Protecting wildlife and preserving recreational access for local residents are two critical priorities that should not be contradictory, especially at Smith Point. It has been over three months since the United States Fish and Wildlife Service presented Suffolk County with a proposal to update the Habitat Conservation Plan for piping plovers at Smith Point Beach. Hopefully the County will move forward with the acceptance and implementation of this Endangered Species Act compliant plan that will protect piping plovers and ensure public access.

The residents of Suffolk County who enjoy Smith Point during the summer season deserve the beach access they paid for through off-road vehicle permits, and Smith Point deserves the same flexibility with regards to piping plover management afforded to beaches in Cape Cod National Seashore and currently being planned for Robert Moses State Park. I urge the County to file the necessary incidental take permits to institute an updated Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) that would allow for a limited number of birds to be moved out of harm's way to designated habitat further down the eastern end of Smith Point. This habitat was constructed explicitly for the conservation of piping plovers nearly two years ago but the lack of flexibility under the current conservation plan rendered this area useless during a four month period last year where the beach was either completely closed to the public, or off-road vehicle access was severely restricted. The flexibility to safely move birds away from the path of off-road vehicles and foot traffic is essential to maintain public access at Smith Point as the high season rapidly approaches.

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It is time to strike a better balance at Smith Point because the status quo is both unfair to Suffolk County residents and fails to proactively protect wildlife. I thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this important issue for our shared constituents. Should you or your staff require any further information or assistance, please contact my District Director, Mark Woolley at mwoolley@mail.house.gov or 631-289-1097, or my Legislative Director, Kevin Dowling at kdowling@mail.house.gov or 202-225-3826.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'LZ', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Lee Zeldin

Member of Congress, 1st District of New York